



**Connecticut  
Housing  
Coalition**

Appropriations Committee  
Public Hearing – March 27, 2009

Testimony of  
Jeffrey Freiser, Executive Director and  
Patricia Spring, Community Developers Network Coordinator  
Connecticut Housing Coalition

<u>Oppose:</u>	S.B. 828 – An Act Concerning State Revenue
<u>Recommend:</u>	Delete Section 1(w) [lines 103-107] to maintain funding for the Community Investment Act.

The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents the broad, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition works to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Connecticut.

### Community Investment Act

The highly effective Community Investment Act (PA 05-228) directs document recording fees to four important uses: farmland protection, historic preservation, open space and affordable housing. Governor Rell's proposed budget would seize \$12 million from these intended purposes in each year of the biennium – possibly the entire amount that will be available. We urge the Committee to safeguard these funds and reject the Governor's attempted raid, contained in S.B. 828.

The Community Investment Act supports essential housing activities that have no other source of funding. Among these initiatives is Housing Connections, an assistance program for suburban and rural communities that stand ready to implement affordable housing in their towns. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Connecticut Housing Coalition partner together to operate Housing Connections. We are proud to report that, in our first eighteen months, we have 343 affordable homes in development in 22 municipalities around the state.

These suburbs and small towns stand ready to do the right thing and embrace affordable housing within their borders. We must not abandon them now. Let us give you an example of our work with the town of Franklin.

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A small group of local residents had been trying for several years to develop senior housing in their community. We met with the members; they expressed their goal and their commitment and enthusiasm to bring this venture to fruition. We assisted them in developing a survey that they distributed to the community, in identifying potential sites for the development and in bringing on a consultant to move their concept forward. Within a year they had an option on a parcel of land, municipal support for the venture, a partnership with an experienced nonprofit organization and a successful HUD 202 application. They are diligently moving forward with their partner to break ground on their 27 unit project in the fall. As Grace Currin, the president of the nonprofit says, "They [Housing Connections] held our hands through the process. We could not have done it without them."

The Community Investment Act also provides gap financing for multi-family housing development that otherwise would not be able to move forward. For example, CIA support has made possible Hartford's Hollander Building, the first green multifamily development in the state of Connecticut. This transit-oriented, historic preservation project is restoring a landmark structure in downtown Hartford and creating 70 units of mixed-income, workforce housing and storefront commercial space that will add new life to this area. It is green development, both in terms of its commitment to LEED standards and its proximity to public transit, jobs, services and other amenities that encourage residents to leave their cars behind.

We recognize that Connecticut faces a substantial budget deficit but, in an economic downturn, we must more than ever maintain our state's housing investments. Housing is a critical strategy for our economic recovery, yielding a unique combination of economic stimulus, job creation and social benefit.

The Community Investment Act funds sought by the Governor are not idle, excess balances. They are ongoing, irreplaceable revenue for urgent investments across our state. Without the resources of the Community Investment Act, these vital programs would all cease. Please do not disinvest in the future of Connecticut.